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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 15 October 1992, at 3 p.m.

President:	Mr. ROGERS (Vice-President)	(Belize)
later:	Mr. MONGBE (Vice-President)	(Benin)

- Social Development: (a) Questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family [93] (continued)

  International Conference on ageing and celebration of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the International Plan of Action on Ageing:

  (i) Reports of the Secretary-General
  (ii) Draft resolution

/...

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- Adoption of the agenda and organization of work: third report of the General Committee [8] (continued)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Rogers (Belize), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 93 (continued)

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: (a) QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AGEING AND CELEBRATION OF THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ADOPTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION ON AGEING:

(i) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/47/339, A/47/369)

(ii) DRAFT RESOLUTION (A/47/L.5/Rev.1)

The PRESIDENT: This afternoon, the General Assembly, in accordance with the decision taken at its 3rd plenary meeting and pursuant to resolution 46/91, is holding the second of the plenary meetings devoted to an international conference on ageing and to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, under sub-item (a) of agenda item 93.

Mr. RICHARDSON (United Kingdom): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Community and its member States on what is a special year for the United Nations programme on ageing. This is the tenth anniversary of the World Assembly on Ageing and of the International Plan of Action on Ageing. The aim of this international conference, endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 46/91, is to celebrate this occasion and to review a set of targets on ageing for the year 2001. This anniversary year presents a unique opportunity to assess the progress of and obstacles to the implementation of the Plan during the past decade and to develop a practical strategy on ageing for the future.

(Mr. Richardson, United Kingdom)

Nearly 10 years of experience in implementing the International Plan of Action on Ageing points to a need for a set of tangible targets in relation to ageing. In its resolution 46/91 the General Assembly adopted a resolution entitled "Implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing and related activities", urging Member States to identify their specific national targets on ageing for the year 2001 and to incorporate the United Nations Principles for Older Persons. The Principles state that opportunities must be provided for elderly people to participate in and contribute to the ongoing activities of society. They include access to work, education and training programmes and family community and health care. Older persons should be able actively to participate in the formulation and implementation of policies which directly affect their well being, and to pursue opportunities for the full development of their potential. They should be able to live in dignity and security, free from exploitation and physical or mental abuse. The European Community and its member States support these principles and hope that today's celebration will mark a turning-point in the international community's awareness of the situation of elderly people.

The dramatic increase in the number and proportion of elderly persons in the world will not only pose unique opportunities for every society but is bringing about profound political, economic and social changes. The growing number and improved health of elderly people in the population must be considered in overall social and economic planning. This massive potential for ageing in the near future has critical policy implications. We must also recognize the skills and experience which people are capable of contributing to society in later life, and shape our policies accordingly. Allocation of resources to ensure income security to elderly dependents, changes in patterns of consumption and investment, improvements in health care and other

(Mr. Richardson, United Kingdom)

developmental issues, as well as the individual needs of rapidly increasing numbers of elderly people are some of the factors to be addressed. Social services should promote the personal autonomy of elderly people as well as enabling them to stay in their environment. Decision makers must be persuaded to start anticipating ageing on a massive scale as today's youth pass through the life cycle to old age. Such forward planning is particularly crucial in developing countries where the number of elderly people is increasing at a faster rate than in the industrialized countries.

The ageing population is especially important given the resources and amenities required for their care. Policies are needed to promote care, independence and dignity by developing an appropriate mix of self-help opportunities, family and community support and government assistance. The European Community Decisions of 26 November 1990 and 24 June 1992 designated 1993 as the Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations. Among the objectives of the Year are to bring to public notice the challenges resulting from the ageing of the population and to promote reflection and discussion on the types of change required in order to deal with current demographic developments. The measures planned throughout the Community by Member States, the Commission, the European Parliament and older persons' organizations include intergenerational activities and information campaigns to combat ageism, promote health and raise awareness of the contribution of older people to society. The Year will be an occasion both of celebration and reflection. The good news - longer and better lives - will be celebrated in exhibitions, festivals and books. What all this means for the rights and needs of older people will be addressed in studies and seminars. Press, radio and television will focus as never before on the concerns and hopes of older people. The Year will provide the starting-point for a wide-ranging, serious

(Mr. Richardson, United Kingdom)

discussion on a number of topics which are becoming ever more important with the ageing of the population. These include the age of retirement, income support and the quality and financing of care services.

It is common knowledge that women comprise the majority of elderly people. We therefore welcomed the Experts Group Meeting on the integration of ageing and elderly women into development which took place in Vienna in October 1991. The Experts Group Meeting recommended that employment policies and practices that discriminate against elderly women should be eliminated. Training and retraining should be available to enable ageing and elderly women to enter or re-enter the labour force. Research is needed to identify ways in which elderly women contribute to development. Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector should take measures to identify and eliminate the exploitation, abuse and neglect of elderly women, as well as violence against elderly women.

The European Community and its member States reaffirm their support for the work of the United Nations Trust Fund for Ageing. We also note with satisfaction the establishment of the Banyan Fund Association, a world fund for ageing, under the patronage of the United Nations. We welcome the creation of this Fund, whose main objective is to promote activities that will enable elderly people to remain independent and to contribute to society in the context of the International Plan of Action on Ageing.

I should like to conclude by thanking the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and all those who have participated in these meetings. The European Community and its member States will continue to give priority to the problems of ageing in order to ensure that the fullest possible assistance is given to those older people who need it and that the value to society of all older people is recognized.

Mrs. RONSCH (Germany) (spoke in German; English text furnished by the delegation): As Minister for Senior Citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany, it is a great pleasure for me to address the Assembly with regard to the concerns of elderly people in the Member States of the United Nations. We should take these plenary meetings as an opportunity to raise public awareness concerning the problems, needs and living conditions of elderly people.

The International Plan of Action on Ageing was adopted in Vienna in 1982. Ten years later, our meetings today enable us to appreciate this event and to inquire as to its implementation. For the future, further impetus can be given to the realization of this programme. In formulating new objectives and points of main emphasis of global policy for the elderly, we will dare to look even beyond the turn of the millenium.

I fully agree with the explanations of the presidency of the European Community. It is a pleasure for me to be given the opportunity on this occasion to make some supplementary remarks and explanations on issues of national, European and international policy for the elderly.

The Federal Government feels under a special obligation to the objectives of the International Plan of Action. It met the request to establish national institutions of policy for the elderly by founding its own Ministry for Senior Citizens. The setting up of this ministry is a structural response to the pressing socio-political challenges connected with demographic development in Germany.

(Mrs. Pönsch, Germany)

Policy ideas and objectives on the elderly are reflected in a recently established Federal Action Programme for the Elderly, which serves as a central supporting instrument for meeting the targets of German policy on the elderly.

In addition to community and Federal Länder measures and projects, this Federal Action Programme is not only the driving force behind but also a guide for socio-cultural services for elderly in our country.

The Federal Action Programme for the Elderly was developed in accordance with the International Plan of Action on Ageing. The intention is to further expand the contents of this Plan on a yearly basis. In my opinion, four areas of main emphasis are: encouraging the independence of and social participation by the elderly; supporting elderly people in need of assistance and care with a view to their independence; bringing living conditions in unified Germany into line; and, last but not least, expanding international policy for senior citizens

The Federal Republic's policy on the elderly, geared to the national and international situations, supports the realization of United Nations global targets on ageing for the year 2001, which we are to adopt jointly.

For Germany, the Federal Government has, on various occasions and in numerous documents, set national targets in its policy for the elderly. A national, comprehensive list of targets is currently being elaborated, one that must be receptive to the new findings and experience we will gain from international cooperation. I find that our targets are, in many respects, congruent with those of our neighbouring countries.

Because of reunification, however, Germans face a special and novel task in connection with policy on the elderly. Living conditions will have to

(Mrs. Rönsch, Germany)

undergo political, economic and social transformations unprecedented in the world.

After the achievement of political union in 1989 through a peaceful revolution in the former German Democratic Republic, attaining economic and social union is now our main objective. The elderly people in the new Federal Länder have gone through and suffered under the rule of the National Socialists, the Second World War and 40 years of dictatorship of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany. Improving their living conditions is one of the central tasks of present-day Germany's senior-citizen policy.

Although this is a task of national scope, the differing social and economic situations of elderly people in West and East Germany is an example of the continuing division of Europe. I am well aware of the fact that global improvement in the living conditions of the elderly in our world will certainly be an incomparably more difficult task, one that calls for manifold efforts and the mobilization of large-scale resources. If, however, we succeed in offering people in West and East Germany comparable prospects in the foreseeable future, we will also have given a signal on a small scale to respond to one of the global issues of ageing. I am referring to the issue of ageing in dignity, irrespective of social environment and regional affiliation.

We would like to incorporate our national experience and the knowledge gained from our policy on the elderly into a supranational framework at a European and an international level. The motto should be "giving and learning". On the European Community level, I am working towards a charter for senior citizens to become a guide for European policy on the elderly. This charter will serve as a useful supplement to the United Nations Principles for Older Persons.

(Mrs. Rönsch, Germany)

The Federal Action Programme for the Elderly that I mentioned earlier, as an instrument of socio-cultural services for the elderly, can also be considered as a measure of development policy at the national level. The international focus of the Federal Action Programme for the Elderly, with its possibilities of exchange of information beyond borders, points to a framework larger than the national level.

Social participation by the elderly in the community, on a regional level and against a national and international background, is one of the pillars of German policy on the elderly. I therefore intend to provide the elderly in Germany, when they retire from their professional lives, with many more fields of activity than ever before. So-called senior citizens' offices are to become community contact agencies, where elderly people can obtain information on making a commitment to act as volunteers as well as on collaborating with self-help groups and neighbourhood action groups.

Never before in history have so many people lived to such a ripe old age. This finding also increasingly applies to the developing countries. However, this must not be interpreted as a global "nightmare". Gerontological research provides us with the knowledge we need in stimulating our socio-cultural resources to meet demands and cope with challenges. International cooperation in research is important in terms of being able to coordinate the solutions to the problems. The issue of ageing in the developing countries will have to be considered in this context even more intensively in future.

(Mrs. Rönsch, Germany)

An important event relating to policy on the elderly at the European level will be the "European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations" in 1993. In coordination with all the main governmental and non-governmental organizations, the Federal Government will mark that year in Germany with a number of congresses and events. In a number of national and European events, the Year of Older People will demonstrate the significance of the issue of ageing. We want the public's perception of the elderly to be more realistic. We want it to correspond to the way the elderly see themselves and want to be seen.

I think it an important and useful measure to involve elderly people as volunteers in the building of social and economic structures. The States receiving this assistance will benefit from the enormous experience and knowledge of the older generation. This will be of particular importance in establishing programmes of assistance for the elderly in the developing countries and in the fledgling democracies of Eastern Europe. Older people themselves can benefit from participating in such measures. They can once again participate in society.

The agreements with our neighbouring States on cooperation in senior-citizen policy I have already signed, as well as others still being prepared, include the mutual promotion of cooperation by non-governmental organizations in the field of socio-cultural services for the elderly. The collaboration of a broad range of organizations in solving the urgent development problems in Eastern Europe is of particular importance.

Consequently, I very much appreciate that the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Office at Vienna plans to hold an expert meeting on the subject "Support for Age Care Activity

(Mrs. Rönsch, Germany)

in Eastern Europe", in cooperation with Help Age International. This expert meeting will represent a useful contribution towards implementing the action programme on ageing for 1992 (resolution 45/106), adopted at the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly. It will also provide a forum where we can discuss practical projects and new fields of activity of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations with regard to socio-cultural services for the elderly in the reform-minded States of Eastern Europe.

The organizational capacities of the non-governmental organizations in organizing projects and programmes for improving the living conditions of elderly people need to be expanded. Hence, I am pleased that the non-governmental organizations from West to East are exchanging experiences about possible solutions to these problems under the umbrella of the United Nations. In this context, efforts should be made to contribute to the establishment of a network of cooperation in the field of socio-cultural services for the elderly in the fledgling democracies of Eastern Europe.

We appreciate the work of the committees where government representatives debate the issues relating to ageing and coordinate their strategies. Germany will also continue to participate in this work constructively.

Finally, I should like once again to touch on our obligations to provide assistance in Eastern Europe and in the developing countries.

(Mrs. Rönsch, Germany)

The reform-minded States of Central and Eastern Europe and the successor States of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics require our assistance in building up their democracies and economic systems. The social structures of the past which the reform-minded States, with their limited efficiency, have taken over from the preceding governments are functioning only to a very restricted extent after the breakdown of their totalitarian administrations. Unless we take account of the social dimension, our forms of assistance in building up democracy and market economy will therefore be nothing more than a skeleton.

The material and social living conditions of elderly people who do not have any possibility of securing their subsistence level through gainful employment have substantially deteriorated. Family structures are breaking up, and this frequently deprives old people of their last line of support. It is the weakest members of society, the elderly, who are hit hardest by the lack of efficient and functioning structures in the social field.

The objective of the remedial measures emanating from my Ministry is to enable the reform-minded States to bring up to date the still existing structures of socio-cultural services for the elderly or even to build up new structures, which is quite in line with the motto "Assistance towards self-help". We want to acquaint the political and social decision-making bodies of the reform-minded States with the rules and the way of functioning of modern structures of socio-cultural services for the elderly. I expect these measures to have an enormous and broad-based effect, which will finally be to the advantage of the elderly. The new opportunities that present themselves are also of extraordinary significance. I am thinking in this context of encounters for old people, exchanges of experience and

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knowledge between experts on socio-cultural services for the elderly and "redisseminators", and the projects which are sponsored by our Ministry.

The situation of the old in the fledgling democracies reflects the social and governmental structures there. If we succeed in supporting those States in improving the living conditions of their senior citizens, we will also have contributed to preventing the disappearance of social and cutural values.

In the industrial nations it is frequently noted with some amazement that the age structures of populations are changing rather more rapidly in the developing countries than in the industrial nations. In the year 2025, more than 70 per cent of people aged 60 years and above will be living in what we today consider to be developing countries.

A particular problem is the growing imbalance in the population structure of the developing countries, and especially of many African States. The assistance already provided in this area by the community of the world's nations still has to be reinforced. The recently established Banyan Fund plays an important role here. I am particularly glad to be able to inform the Assembly that an old age home, sponsored by resources from the Fund, celebrated its opening in Uganda on 4 October 1992. On this occasion I should like to thank Uganda and especially the diocese of Mukono not only for making the grounds available but also for ensuring the maintenance of the old-age home in the future.

The Federal Government is striving to develop measures and programmes which will give support to the countries of the third world in building up their own social insurance systems. The changes in the age structures of the developing countries will considerably increase the need for these kinds of assistance in the future.

(Mrs. Rönsch, Germany)

My country's development aid policy will in the future increasingly support target-group-oriented measures which are geared specifically to elderly people in the third world. Concrete examples of this are the establishment of old people's nursing schools in Korea and the extension of open-door assistance services for senior citizens in Mexico City. In support of such measures my Ministry will also attend to the issues of cooperation with less developed States to a still larger extent than has been the case in the past.

In this context we feel that we have a share of the responsibility for creating a world of peace for the fair and equal participation of all people.

Mr. KÄÄRIÄ (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the five Nordic countries: Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Finland.

The principles and targets of the United Nations International Plan of Action on Ageing, which was adopted ten years ago, are still valid. The World Assembly on Ageing held in 1982 had considerable influence on the discussion of old age in general and especially on people's attitudes. Today elderly people are seen more and more clearly as a resource. Independence, personal initiative and living in one's own home are aspects that are now emphasized more than they were before in all Nordic countries. The emphasis in services for the elderly has been shifted from institutional structures to open care.

In the Nordic countries, the social status of the elderly has risen as a result of their increased average age and improved health and social conditions. Their needs, thus, have to be taken into account in all sectors of societal life: in working life, family policy, education and community planning. This has resulted in improvements in the conditions necessary for independent living, which has in turn led to greater understanding and cooperation between generations.

(Mr. Kääriä, Finland)

In the Nordic countries the bulk of expenditures related to old age goes for pensions. Even though the structures and compensation levels of Nordic pension schemes vary considerably from country to country, the income security of elderly people is, by international comparison, good in all Nordic countries.

In the Nordic countries pensions have relieved the younger generations of everyday personal responsibility for securing the living conditions of the older generations. The foreseeable growth of the overall expenditures for pensions, however, worries us. It is obvious that we have to reform our pension schemes in order to hold down expenditures.

At present, a particular problem is retirement prior to the actual pensionable age. It is paradoxical that at the same time as the health of the ageing population is improving, people's desire to retire before the actual pensionable age is increasing.

One major objective of Nordic social security policies is to provide all residents with comprehensive social and health services. We have succeeded relatively well in this regard. However, it is justifiable to ask if we have paid enough attention to the everyday life of elderly people. Do we take sufficient account of their own wishes? Has their participation in society been adequately safeguarded? Do we genuinely listen to the voice and wisdom of old age or do we plan their lives from above, so to speak, according to our own values?

(Mr.Kääriä, Finland)

The level of knowledge about ageing, about the prevention of problems related to old age, and about opportunities offered by the community is of particular importance. During the last few years, the elderly themselves, through pensioners' organizations, have become increasingly involved in the improvement of the welfare and well-being of their own group. Participation and equality remain major goals and imply that pensioners must be given the same opportunities as others with regard to financial prosperity, education, work, housing, traveling and cultural and leisure pursuits.

According to a new law in Norway, Norwegian municipalities and counties will be required to appoint councils for the elderly. The council is an independent advisory body of five to nine old-age pensioners nominated by the pensioners' union and appointed by the municipality or county. Its tasks are to make recommendations on all matters of policy concerning the elderly, whether put forward by the municipality or county or on their own initiative.

The rising average age also means a growing number of people in need of special care and welfare services. Especially those elderly people who suffer from dementia need support and various types of services. In Sweden a comprehensive administrative reform is being implemented, bringing about a major expansion of group dwellings for elderly people with dementia and those with equivalent needs.

One of the most important reassessments in welfare services for elderly people in the Nordic countries has been the gradual shift of emphasis from institutional to community services. This has been made possible through the improved health and financial situation of elderly people as well as improved housing conditions. Denmark already has an advanced and innovative system of housing services, providing the elderly with a wide and flexible range of choices and combinations.

(Mr.Kääriä, Finland)

The number and proportion of elderly people living in their private homes is increasing. This indicates that an increase in the number of elderly people does not necessarily increase the need for social services. We can exert an influence in this respect by our own action and choices, as the Danish examples show.

Old-age welfare policies are closely tied to the economy and to available financial resources. In the years to come, the implementation of the objectives of such policies will be influenced by the slower growth in our national economies, compared with what we were accustomed to in the 1980s. The needs of the elderly will have to compete for resources with other sectors. This underlies the need for defining priorities based on common values and effectively using available resources.

Given the demographic and economic changes, the development of our national policies for the elderly should be based on the following principles. The boundaries between institutional and open care must be broken, and elderly people in need of care should be able to choose between the two. Alternative ways of providing the necessary services must be discussed openly. Cooperation between social welfare and health care has to be intensified. The strict division of labor between different categories of professionals within the service network must be reduced and informal care and voluntary activities encouraged. Moreover, elderly persons' own responsibility for carrying the costs of services will be more important in the future.

In order to be able to pursue a policy of humane and economically sound welfare for the aged, it is important to encourage the contributions of families, the local community and elderly people themselves, in addition to the appropriate financial support from society. For instance, pensioners in

(Mr.Kääriä, Finland)

better health may wish to help their frailer fellow citizens, if suitable channels are found.

In Finland social legislation is being amended to improve the legal status of informal caretakers, mostly family members. The aim is to make it possible for frail elderly people to continue living within their familiar settings and to make informal caretaking a real alternative to employment outside the home.

In the foregoing, I have sketched the outlines of welfare policies for the elderly in Nordic countries and the future prospects of such policies, which have many points in common with the Secretary-General's present proposal of eight global targets on ageing for the year 2001 (A/47/339). Especially important in our view is target No. 3, regarding support for local communities in their endeavours to create better services and programmes for the elderly. This target corresponds to the Nordic approach, which aims to shift decision-making and responsibility to a greater extent to the local level, closer to the citizens' real needs.

In developing welfare policies for the elderly, it is of primary importance to intensify cooperation at both national and international levels, including Governments, non-governmental organizations, voluntary organizations and researchers - without forgetting the elderly people themselves. Such cooperation requires an improved exchange of information between the United Nations, its Member States and other bodies. In the future, regional conferences could also be envisaged, as the problems vary considerably from region to region. Since the resources available in the near future may not be growing, existing contacts such as the network of non-governmental organizations should be used more effectively.

(Mr.Kääriä, Finland)

The report of the Secretary-General quite rightly draws special attention to the situation of the developing countries and the need to improve the circumstances of the elderly in those countries. The United Nations has a significant role to play, especially in supporting projects related to the ageing of the population in the developing countries. Despite urbanization and other structural changes in society, the developing countries should be given encouragement and support in their own efforts to maintain family structures in which elderly people are respected and cared for at home.

As stated in the report of the Secretary-General, the broad goals of the Plan of Action on Ageing, which was adopted 10 years ago, have not been reached. Therefore, it would have been desirable for the General Assembly to be presented at this special series of meetings with an evaluation of the impact of the past decade on the living conditions of the elderly and the development of welfare policies for them.

The report of the Secretary-General communicates the negative notion of an uncontrollable demographic problem. While this concern can be shared by us all, a positive and realistic approach backed up by adequate information would be an important starting point for national and regional programmes of action. The preparation of national targets and programmes is most important, but setting goals and adopting national programmes is not enough. Active implementation and evaluation of the measures taken is also needed.

All nations need old-age welfare policies that are open to reform and innovations and based on the needs of the elderly. Through international cooperation we can learn from each other, applying the models of action that suit our own countries and cultures. I am convinced that the dedication of

(Mr.Kääriä, Finland)

these four special meetings of the General Assembly to issues of ageing give us the required new impetus for rethinking and reformulating our old-age policies at both the national and the international levels.

Mr. NKOMO (Zimbabwe): The Zimbabwe delegation expresses its sincere condolences and deepest sympathy to the delegation of Egypt, and through it to the families of the victims of the recent earthquake which claimed many lives and has caused so much suffering to the people and Government of Egypt.

This tenth anniversary provides us with an occasion to evaluate the implementation of the 1982 Vienna Plan of Action and to adopt the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, a practical step indeed.

The issue of ageing is of vital importance to the developing countries - contrary to the myth that it is a concern of developed countries only. It is said that the world population is expected to reach 6.3 billion by the year 2007, and two thirds of that number will be in developing countries. According to United Nations projections for the years 1980 to 2025, the African region will experience one of the largest increases in numbers of persons aged 60 and over among all the world's regions. Thus it is estimated that its older population will rise from 22.9 million in 1980 to 101.9 million by the year 2025.

It is also important to point out that in the coming decades, the African elderly population is going to remain largely rural. Recent projections indicate that in the year 2000 approximately 60 per cent will live in areas defined as rural.

Because of the cost of support structures for the elderly, developing countries will probably take a path different from the welfare approach widely adopted in developed countries. The policy implications of the rapid numerical growth in Africa's elderly population during the period from 1980 to 2025 become even more pronounced if one considers that this group will grow faster than the population as a whole. Therefore the fact that in the year 2000 a larger proportion of Africa's elderly will live in areas defined as rural is

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cause for concern. The large increases in the number of older persons must influence planners in providing health care, social welfare, income security and rehabilitation facilities appropriate for this rapidly growing segment of the population. Though the service infrastructure will have to be strengthened in both the rural and the urban context to meet the needs of the growing numbers of the ageing, policy makers should focus particular attention on the historically weaker rural areas.

State-based social security systems are not well established in most developing countries. According to available evidence, the extended family and the community still constitute the primary sources of care for the elderly, maintaining traditional responsibilities for providing them with necessary shelter, clothing, food and health care. However, it has become clear that with urbanization, industrialization and modernization, this support system is constantly weakening. Specific impacts include physical separation of family members when young persons take up employment in distant plantations, mines or factories, or migrate to cities in search of jobs or education.

The growing size of the vulnerable section of the population is itself a matter of great concern. So far, because of an abnormally high young dependency ratio, the social-service delivery system has been geared mainly to the needs of the young population. With the growth in the dependency ratio of the elderly at the expense of the young, it will be necessary in the future to pay greater attention to the development of delivery systems aimed at serving the elderly.

Health care for the elderly is yet another problem. People are especially susceptible to health problems when they are very young or when they are very old. Various studies dealing with the status of the health of

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the elderly in Zimbabwe have indicated that substantial numbers of the elderly, in both rural and urban areas, suffer from various kinds of ailments at one time or another, and in some cases the diseases are chronic. Yet the health-care delivery systems geared specifically to the needs of the elderly are less than comprehensive. The elderly have to make do with an existing general health-care system which not only is inadequate for their specific needs but also is not easily accessible. There is thus a growing need for supplementing the resources of the family with external services for taking care of the elderly. Such supplementary care is especially needed by the elderly who live alone, either by choice or by force of circumstances.

Elderly women are much more vulnerable than men. Culturally, women are mostly dependent on men. In terms of education also, they lag far behind men. They are rendered even more vulnerable by the fact that most of them become widows when they are old, mainly because women generally live longer. In Zimbabwe, among the elderly persons living alone, the percentage of elderly women is much higher.

AIDS has now added a new dimension to the problem - a reversal of the traditional system of roles in which the children and grandchildren looked after and cared for their elderly. It is now the elderly who are increasingly faced with the enormous task of caring for orphans. This task falls almost exclusively on elderly women. In Zimbabwe the population of persons aged 60 and above is currently estimated at 500,000, roughly 5 per cent of the total population.

Despite this large number, there is inadequate awareness of the needs of the elderly, and a consequent neglect of the development of the necessary support systems. Such a state of affairs is very unfortunate, especially

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when one considers that the problem of the elderly is taking on a serious dimension. The present complacent attitude towards the problem has, however, been supported by two major considerations of the past, namely, a relatively low proportion of the elderly in the population and an effective support system traditionally provided to the elderly by their families. But both of those conditions are now rapidly changing, to the detriment of the elderly.

Having examined the global and local situation, we now turn to the measures that Zimbabwe has developed to improve the life and care of the elderly during the last decade.

Shortly after achieving independence in 1980, the country announced a health policy that promoted primary health care. This primary-health-care strategy is designed to enable the greatest number of our people, particularly the poor and those in inaccessible parts of the country, to benefit from health services. Although these health-care services were not specifically focused on the elderly, they nevertheless did not exclude them.

A vigorous nutrition programme has also been launched since independence. This measure, which has been integrated into primary health care, benefits mostly those under five, but it is also accessible to the elderly.

(Mr. Nkomo, Zimbabwe)

In 1986 an international workshop was held to develop the Zimbabwe Plan of Action for the Elderly. One of the most useful recommendations to come from this workshop related to the need to create an intersectoral committee to work out strategies and coordinate programmes geared to the well-being of the elderly. This Committee, which involves representatives from government and non-governmental organizations, churches and our educational institutions, has made remarkable progress in motivating our Government to address the needs of the elderly in a much more meaningful way.

In 1988 a Social Welfare Assistance Act was promulgated. Its purpose was to render public assistance to the disadvantaged groups, which include the elderly.

Further, a national social security act was passed to guarantee income security in old age to workers in both the formal and the non-formal sectors. These two pieces of legislation offer concrete evidence of the actions taken by my Government, in compliance with the Vienna Plan of Action, to provide income security to the needy elderly.

Generally, governmental and non-governmental policies are focused on promoting the independent living of the elderly in their normal home environment. Programmes such as public assistance, drought relief, home help, meals on wheels, community-based rehabilitation and primary health care are all aimed at strengthening the family support and the well-being of the elderly.

While our policies and programmes emphasize community-based assistance, there are exceptional instances where the elderly have to be cared for in institutions. Zimbabwe has more than 35 homes for the aged run by non-governmental organizations and churches. Our Government contributes to

(Mr. Nkomo, Zimbabwe)

the care of the elderly in such institutions through offering per capita, building and administrative grants.

In 1991 a workshop was held to review the 1986 Zimbabwe Plan of Action for the Elderly. The workshop noted some progress in some areas; but it observed that in the absence of comprehensive legislation to promote the independent living of the elderly, accessibility to housing, rehabilitation and changing community attitudes in favour of regarding the elderly as contributing members and guaranteeing them income security and accessibility to health services, there would be serious limitations to the Plan of Action.

Accordingly, the Zimbabwe Government has now resolved to create a comprehensive piece of legislation that embraces both the 1982 Vienna Plan of Action and the 1986 Zimbabwe Plan of Action to address the needs of our elderly in a much more practical and useful manner.

While Zimbabwe may have done well up to now, I wish to point out that the uneven implementation of the Vienna Plan of Action may be attributed to many reasons, among which is the inadequacy of resources in developing countries. Thus, with respect to the future, we believe that community care, founded upon and sustained by political will and supported by appropriate legal instruments on the part of governments, will offer the best means of meeting the needs of the elderly much more effectively, more systematically and more efficiently.

As demographic ageing is predictable, we are concerned that our social and economic infrastructures will lag behind. Thus, national governments and the international community have to revise their strategies.

(Mr. Nkomo, Zimbabwe)

In our view, the strategies must aim at: enabling people to live as normal a life as possible in their own homes, in a family environment and in the local community; providing the right level of care and support to help people achieve the greatest possible degree of independence; and giving people a greater say in how they live their lives and the services they need.

Indeed, the first decade of the Plan of Action achieved some degree of awareness of the challenges of ageing and the potentialities of older persons, but our vision for the future cannot be fully realized without substantial resources being channelled into the developing countries.

Zimbabwe is in agreement with the global targets contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/47/339), which are a practical strategy for channelling the interest, enthusiasm, expertise and experience of many elderly people and defining the priorities to the year 2000, as stated in that document. We are satisfied that the document provides the framework for activities to be undertaken at the national and the international level.

In this regard, we call for the strengthening of the regional institutions, particularly the nascent African Gerontological Society, which is lagging behind in the fulfilment of its mandate, and the Panos Institute, as well as the appropriate United Nations institutions.

We hope very much that when the Committee on Social Development meets next year in Vienna, as it begins preparing for the 1995 world summit for social development, the agenda will include a special section on the elderly.

Mrs. TAVARES de ALVAREZ (Dominican Republic) (interpretation from Spanish): The delegation of the Dominican Republic wishes, first of all, to join in the expression of condolences by the delegation of Zimbabwe to the Egyptian nation with regard to the disaster that occurred there.

(Mrs. Tavares de Alvarez, Dominican Republic)

Ordinarily, the celebration of an anniversary is a time for looking back, but the 1982 World Assembly on Ageing held at Vienna and the International Plan of Action on Ageing, which was its immediate result, engendered a creative change. The Plan was forward-looking. The measure of its success is that today we are not just praising it, we are building upon it, and reshaping it to fit changing circumstances and our perception of what the ageing of populations means to our societies. The Plan of Action on Ageing relates less to what has happened than to what is happening and what is to come.

One can see this in the report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing; celebration, assessment, planning ahead. This document honours the Plan of Action on Ageing by showing just how live and adaptable it is. As the report states:

"... it has been a year of arrival, but more importantly, it is one of departure." (A/47/369, para.47)

Attitudes are beginning to change. The world is finally beginning to see that population ageing involves much more than humanitarian assistance. The very words we use express this transformation. We hear less and less about the problems of ageing and more about productive ageing. We are concerned not only with helping but also with empowering the elderly. Embedded in this practical, developmental approach to ageing that has come to the fore, is the notion that dependence between the generations does not just go one way. At long last we are recognizing the full human potential of the elderly.

(Mrs. Tavares de Alvarez, Dominican Republic)

We are learning to adapt our approach to the resources and technology available. We have finally realized the value of reaching out to non-governmental organizations and the private sector in cooperative efforts, in order to be able to do what Governments alone cannot do well or cannot do at all. We are also becoming more aware of how much we underestimated the abilities of a fundamental human resource - the elderly themselves. The obstacle has often been not the creative and productive potential of the elderly but the boundaries of our own imagination.

One crucial area in which this new kind of partnership has begun to bear fruit is that of productive ageing. In the past decade we have seen that older people, besides having needs that must be met, have much to offer society. In our developing nations it is fortunate that we have recognized at last that with a little assistance many of the elderly are capable of helping society as they help themselves.

Since zero growth is so often the economic context today, this is one kind of solution that is cost-effective. World population ageing is a consequence of development. But, as the World Council of Churches put it, the elderly have also become "casualties of development". Why not close the circle and let those elders who can do so - mostly those from 60 to 75 years of age - become involved in the process of development and, in doing so, promote that process and help themselves?

In many of our countries senior enterprises are an increasingly important channel through which productive ageing becomes a reality. With modest capital investment, developing nations have already launched elders in such varied businesses as child care, bakeries, automobile repair shops and word-processing.

(Mrs. Tavares de Alvarez, Dominican Republic)

Non-governmental organizations often sponsor such projects. Private enterprise too has begun to play an important role; after all, social stability and keeping a lid on the tax burden are very much in its interest.

The Secretary-General's report cites the recently created Banyan Fund, part of the new partnership to provide a little assistance for productive-ageing initiatives. Based in Paris, the Fund is a private, independent organization sponsored by the United Nations. Among other activities, it raises capital from the private sector and from other non-governmental organizations to finance projects in which older people become masters of their own economic fate - even agents of economic development - rather than merely passive recipients of assistance.

The report also mentions the International Institute on Ageing, established in Malta under United Nations auspices. That Institute has fostered vitally needed research, disseminated information and provided training in the field of ageing.

Similarly encouraging is the recently formed African Gerontology Society, which has displayed a great spirit of initiative, even in the face of the many other pressing economic problems troubling that continent.

We should like especially to acknowledge the United Nations Population Fund's many contributions to the United Nations programme on ageing. The research project "Developmental implications of demographic change: global population ageing" identifies the roles, relationships and contributions of older persons and of their families and communities in our developing countries. It should help us to formulate programmes and projects that are particularly relevant to our experience with ageing, which is not always the same as that of the developed countries.

(Mrs. Tavares de Alvarez, Dominican Republic)

The project is financed by the United Nations Population Fund with co-funding from HelpAge International, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and the SSM Bridges International Center on Aging. The Swedish Government also made a major contribution.

We are especially proud to add to these successes the announcement that a centre on ageing at Santiago, Dominican Republic will open officially in January 1993. Under the sponsorship of the SSM Bridges International Center on Aging, it will serve as a laboratory for testing and validating new approaches to empowering the elderly in a third world country. The main characteristic of those approaches is that they could be adaptable to other countries.

We have learned from experience that a central task in improving the lot of the elderly, now and in the future, is to bring them back into the mainstream of society. Either they are citizens with rights and appropriate responsibilities or they are not. If not, they can be no more than a burden on society's limited resources at a time when other groups are competing for those resources. As citizens, they can make a contribution, enlarging the pool of material resources with other, intangible resources - such as experience, knowledge and wisdom - that will be sorely needed in the coming decades.

To set this process in motion, we shall have to convince policy makers of the strategic importance of this sector of the population, for it is inevitable that some scarce public resources will have to be allocated to ageing-related programmes. This will become more feasible politically when it is seen as tapping the productive potential of older people, and thus as an investment, not just another social-welfare expense.

(Mrs. Tavares de Alvarez, Dominican Republic)

We believe that we are pointed in the right direction. The report of the Secretary-General entitled "Global targets on ageing for the year 2001: a practical strategy", constitutes the most recent undertaking of the United Nations programme on ageing. It outlines what is feasible at this time and seeks a more effective use of existing structures, procedures and resources. It is encouraging not only for its specifics but also for its general tone. The report states inter alia:

> "The target strategies comprise core activities, permitting expansion and adjustment in the course of the decade as experience is gained."
>
> (A/47/339, para.12)

Thus we approach our tasks with an open mind, for we are trying to find out what works.

The global targets document also makes it clear that we are not dealing with elderly people as merely subjects of our concern. The report sees the elderly as "both agents and beneficiaries" of development. The importance of productive ageing is implicit throughout the entire document.

The report is imbued with the idea that older people belong in the mainstream of social life. For example, target No. 2 sets as a task the identification of those programmes which have a component on ageing and the integration of the subject of ageing into relevant United Nations inter-agency meetings for such issues as population, women, disabled persons, youth and family and into strategies for the current and next United Nations Development Decade. The report further emphasizes that issues of ageing are inextricably tied to virtually every other issue with which we must contend.

The report also states that the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs is the nucleus of multisectoral cooperation and the

(Mrs. Tavares de Alvarez, Dominican Republic)

catalyst of cooperation between the formal and informal sectors, and that it covers the five world regions. All of this it does with a very small staff, insufficient for the demands of today and far from being able to meet the projected demands of tomorrow.

The Centre is an important tool in our response to population ageing. It is one of the means by which we may take true aim at our global targets. We can no longer afford to blunt its effectiveness. We must take its work seriously and staff it so that it may do the serious work that lies ahead of it.

There is much to be done to raise world consciousness of ageing of populations so that there is the political will to allocate the necessary resources to accomplish these tasks. Therefore, let us begin with those steps that are now within our power to take.

In the past we have served the world's ageing populations through a few strategic measures, such as the adoption of the International Plan of Action on Ageing in 1982 and the adoption of the United Nations Principles for Older Persons in 1991. What better way could there be to celebrate this tenth anniversary than by endorsing the global targets on ageing for the year 2001 and adopting the proclamation on ageing of 1992 expressing hope in humanity's coming of age?

Such steps will enable us to say in another 10 years that the Plan of Action on Ageing, too, has aged productively.

Mr. WANG Zhaohua (China) (interpretation from Chinese): The World Assembly on Ageing in 1982 and the International Plan of Action on Ageing have played a very important role in promoting the work on ageing in China and the world as well as world peace, friendship, solidarity and cooperation. In the

(Mr. Wang Zhaohua, China)

past decade, thanks to the efforts made by the related bodies and agencies of the United Nations, the issue of the ageing of the population has been given increasing importance and attention by countries of the world.

The special plenary meetings of the United Nations General Assembly on ageing, which take stock of the work done in the past and look into the future, will be another important event on ageing with historic significance and another initiative of vision and wisdom marking a new historical stage in the evolution of the work on the question of ageing in the world. We believe that these special meetings will bring new vitality to, and produce a positive impact on, the cause of ageing in all countries of the world, and especially in the developing countries.

It is a Chinese tradition to respect, love and support the elderly. The Chinese Government has always attached great importance to the issue of ageing. The relevant United Nations resolutions on ageing and the International Plan of Action on Ageing have been implemented in China with remarkable achievements.

The China National Committee on Ageing was established in 1982 as a national mechanism for the implementation of the Plan of Action on Ageing, followed by the establishment of local committees on ageing as well as related organizations, such as the Gerontological Society, the China Fund for the Elderly, the Association of the Universities of the Third Age and the Elderly Sports Association.

(Mr. Wang Zhaohua, China)

In rural areas, associations of the elderly have been set up in 50 per cent of the villages. Thus, a nationwide network of organizations on ageing has been formed, with more than 10,000 full-time staff and more than 100,000 part-time workers and volunteers providing services to senior citizens.

In accordance with China's actual conditions and its cultural and historical tradition, the following five goals have been set for addressing the issue of ageing: the elderly should be supported, medically cared for, given the opportunity to contribute to society, engage in life-long learning and lead interesting and happy lives.

Wide publicity has been given to the issue of ageing throughout the country with such publications as newspapers, magazines and pictorials on ageing; various activities have been carried out to celebrate the International Day for the Elderly and the Chinese Double Ninth Festival - a day to honour the elderly in China -, model senior citizens have been rewarded for their contribution to society and exemplary young people have been honoured for their respect for the elderly.

Academic institutes and associations in the field of ageing have been set up to conduct systematic research and study on the ageing of the population.

Twenty-eight provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities have promulgated local Laws on the Elderly to protect the legal rights of the elderly, and the drafting of the National Regulations on Protecting the Rights of Old People has been completed.

The social security system has been improved with the guiding principles of the combination of support by and contribution to society, basing social support on the contribution of the elderly, and giving play to the role of the family and society in supporting the elderly. A family contract on supporting the elderly has been widely introduced in rural areas.

(Mr. Wang Zhaohua, China)

The Government actively encourages the elderly to participate in social development. Thirty-five per cent of the 100 million elderly in China are playing a role in various sectors of society.

A number of facilities for the elderly, such as activity centres, special apartments, geriatric hospitals and stores devoted to the needs of the elderly, have been set up. Two thousand five hundred schools, more than 70 newspapers and 2,500 factories that manufacture products for the elderly are dedicated to the service of our senior citizens. More than 30 million elderly people are participating in various kinds of sports activities.

Links have been established with organizations from more than 40 countries in the world.

China's work in the field of ageing in the past 10 years has received support and assistance from the United Nations, the United Nations Population Fund, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and other international organizations, for which I would like to express, on behalf of the 100 million elderly Chinese, our cordial thanks.

As a developing country with a rather weak foundation in the work on ageing, China still faces numerous difficulties in this field. At present, the elderly population of China has already exceeded 100 million and is increasing at an annual rate of three per cent. According to projections, by the year 2000, the elderly population in China will reach 130 million, or about 10 per cent of our total population, making China an "aged" society. By the 2040s, this number will have peaked to 380 million, accounting for about 25 per cent of the total population. The rapid rate of ageing of the

(Mr. Wang Zhaohua, China)

population in China is unique in the world. With such a fast pace of ageing and the huge absolute number of elderly, who account for about a quarter of the world's elderly population and about half of the elderly population of Asia, we need to continue our efforts. We eagerly look forward to continued assistance and support from the United Nations and other international organizations.

In order to realize the international targets on ageing, we will try to accomplish the following tasks:

- to improve the social security system and find a Chinese way of supporting the elderly that will strengthen the role of the family and of society in a partnership between the State, the collective, the community and the family;

- to map out a strategy and plan for the work on ageing that would be integrated into the national economic and social development plan for implementation;

- to enhance the work on national legislation for the elderly, and launch a national educational campaign to promote respect, love and support for the elderly;

(Mr. Wang Zhaohua, China)

- to formulate policies aimed at mobilizing the wisdom and expertise of the elderly, giving them an opportunity to participate more actively in social development;

- to promote social welfare, education, health services and cultural activities in the service of the elderly;

- to set up a service network based in the community;

- to strengthen scientific research on population ageing with a view to proposing policy options;

- to further promote international exchanges and co-operation in this field.

With the joint efforts of the international community in the last 10 years, work on ageing has broken new ground, and it will enter a new stage in the coming decade. Various social problems, including the issue of ageing, face the whole world and the developing countries in particular. We believe that the international community should pay more attention and give effective assistance in this regard. We are confident that the United Nations has an important role to play in promoting international co-operation and exchanges in the field of ageing.

We sincerely hope that all the elderly people in the world will enjoy social security and a constantly improving quality of life, and a carefree existence in peace and happiness in their later years.

Finally, I wish the Assembly complete success at these meetings and all the elderly people in the world happiness and longevity.

Mr. BURCUOGLU (Turkey) (interpretation from French): My delegation takes pleasure in speaking on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the World Assembly on Ageing and the adoption of the International Plan of Action.

(Mr. Burcuoglu, Turkey)

Today ageing population is a phenomenon that is apparent in all societies. It is demographic, social, economic and cultural. It is more evident in the developed countries, but it is also growing in the developing countries. According to projections, the total number of elderly people, those over 60 years of age, will be 600 million in the year 2001; it will rise to 1.2 billion by 2025. This phenomenon has an impact upon the social and economic structures of societies, raising complex problems that require the adaptation of relevant programmes and policies.

Turkey is no exception to this overall picture. Awareness of the ageing population is becoming ever more clear, catching the attention of relevant institutions and the media. The latter are contributing to increased public awareness on the subject, and health services and rehabilitation centres are organizing themselves. The elderly benefit from discounts in various sectors, from transportation to cultural activities. Private-sector initiatives for the provision of services to the elderly are encouraged.

In Turkish society, the elderly have traditionally been accorded the highest respect. They have made a valuable contribution to Turkey. That, together with the role played by the Turkish family as the driving force for social solidarity, constitutes a very important asset for Turkey as it deals with questions related to its ageing population.

The first International Day for the Elderly was celebrated on 1 October 1991. It gave us the opportunity to declare our solidarity with the elderly, and it contributed considerably to increasing international public awareness in this connection.

Last year was also marked by the adoption of the United Nations Principles for Older Persons. Those Principles are intended to permit them to live better in the additional years they now enjoy.

(Mr. Burcuoglu, Turkey)

This time, we have two new important documents on our agenda. The first is the draft proclamation on ageing, which expresses the hope to see mankind take a mature approach to this subject. We support it. The second is the report of the Secretary-General on global targets on ageing for the year 2001. Those targets emphasize measures to be taken at the national level, without forgetting the need for regional and international co-operation. My delegation welcomes these targets. They will help us meet the challenge presented by the ageing of the world population, and they will serve as a framework for the activities to be undertaken.

We wish to emphasize that everything possible must be done to enable the generation of wisdom to live with the dignity they deserve. We should not allow ourselves to neglect these human resources and the immense experience that that generation represents.

In conclusion, I express the hope that we shall establish our activities in carrying out the global targets in such a way that they will be a catalyst for international co-operation.

Mr. SUPENO (Indonesia): At the outset I wish to express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his earlier remarks on this occasion of the tenth anniversary of the World Assembly on Ageing. I should also like to welcome the two reports issued by the Secretary-General related to this issue contained in documents A/47/339 and A/46/369. The question of ageing is indeed a truly important issue that needs to be fully addressed by the international community as the ageing of our societies has significant and far-reaching implications for our current and future socio-economic and cultural development programmes. These meetings are particularly important in that they afford us the occasion to promote national

(Mr. Supeno, Indonesia)

and international understanding of the humanitarian and development issues related to the question of ageing.

As was noted in the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing, the progressive ageing of our societies is neither an unexpected, unforeseen event nor a random result of national and international development efforts. Rather, it is the result of socio-economic development throughout the world and must be accompanied by appropriate responses to ensure continued balanced growth and development.

(Mr. Supeno, Indonesia)

It was more recently noted, at the Tenth Summit Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, that "... the challenges of the 1990s would be to formulate new policies and to build on current initiatives that would effectively meet the human needs of present and future generations". Additionally, the Movement welcomed the consensus reached on reinforcement of human and social development by "... enlarging choices and ensuring the development of the full potential of individuals ... and improving life expectancy".

As we proceed to enhance our national development strategies, as programmes for family planning gain greater acceptance and success, and as our health-care services improve, the changing demographics will require these strategies to adapt to the changes. It was noted at the non-aligned summit that the population question cannot be considered separately from that of overall development but, rather, should be treated as an integral part. Housing, health care and nutrition, labour and employment, as well as social security, are examples of areas that will need adjustment to demographic shifts, in the light of specific needs and constraints. This will entail the adoption of policies that are not designed to warehouse the elderly but seek to include them in the development process of their respective nations, thus employing their knowledge and skills and allowing for continued self-worth and dignity.

Ten years ago, the World Assembly on Ageing solemnly recognized that the quality of life is no less important than longevity, and that the elderly should

> "be enabled to enjoy in their own families and communities a life of fulfilment, health, security and contentment, appreciated as an integral part of society". (A/CONF.113/31, chap. VI A, Preamble, para. 2)

(Mr. Supeno, Indonesia)

My delegation would like to reaffirm that recognition and the importance of implementing programmes that will facilitate the continuing participation of the elderly in all aspects of society. I should like to note that a general policy recommendation of the Vienna Plan of Action was that policies and actions should be inspired by a determination to give qualitative content and meaning to the increased years in life expectancy. The members of our ageing populations must be afforded a continued opportunity to contribute their accumulated knowledge and experience in order to maintain a sense of purpose and accomplishment. It is, moreover, of benefit to overall national development when all human resources can be productively utilized. In this regard, the "Global targets on ageing for the year 2001: a practical strategy" offer a useful framework for integrating ageing into development.

We must therefore continue to work towards the objectives of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, which includes not only attaining greater awareness of the ageing question, but also translating that awareness into appropriate responses. I should like to stress that development programmes in any society should take into account demographic changes and offer appropriate responses. Within the developing countries as a whole, thus far the institutional infrastructure has not been able adequately to meet the needs of the increased ageing populations. Resources need to be found to enhance this capacity, anticipating that as more family members enter the work force, it will become more difficult to provide traditional family care.

Within Indonesia, the demographic configuration of the nation will in the not-too-distant future undergo a considerable transformation. Our total population is at present 180 million, and as of 1990 11 per cent were over the age of 50, and nearly 4 per cent over 65. As a result of our national development programmes, nutrition levels are improving, health care is

(Mr. Supeno, Indonesia)

becoming more accessible, even in remote areas, and standards of living are likewise increasing, along with the life expectancy rate, which now stands at around 60 years of age. The child mortality rate in 1971 was estimated at 142 per 1,000, whereas in 1988 it was approximately 58 per 1,000, a decline of about 59 per cent. At the same time, the national family planning programme has been quite successful, with national population growth down to about 2.1 per cent by the mid-1980s. What is particularly important for our national policymakers to consider, however, is the fact that our 1980 census indicated that 42 per cent of the population was then under 15 years of age. The members of this age group, forming the largest percentage of the population, will reach their formative years together, and eventually we shall have gone from a predominantly youthful society to an ageing one. It is therefore of considerable importance for us to address the question of ageing.

Indonesia is of the view that matters concerning the improvement of the social welfare of the ageing should be dealt with by a national body, so as to ensure a uniform course of action, integrated national programmes and coordinated activities avoiding either an overlap or a gap. By virtue of a decision taken by the Coordinating Minister for Social Welfare, a working group has been established and given the mandate of assisting the Minister in formulating a comprehensive and integrated policy on ageing. It is our view that, in principle, the Government and society share responsibility for dealing with matters relating to social welfare. For example, while the Government has taken steps to provide nursing homes for the aged who cannot be cared for at home, community-based organizations have played a substantive role in caring for them.

(Mr. Supeno, Indonesia)

The Indonesian delegation would suggest that, in promoting the social welfare of the ageing, proper attention should be given to: first, creating employment opportunities for those who still can and need to work, in conformity with existing regulations and standards of society; secondly, providing education and training, both as an activity and as a means of retraining for different professions; thirdly, ensuring that social or income security is available when help is needed, as well as nursing homes; fourthly, dealing with the decrease in earning power as a result of retirement from service or living on a pension; and, fifthly, enacting laws and regulations that support and improve the social welfare of the ageing.

In conclusion, let me say that the Indonesian society has a long and strong tradition of care and respect for the older members of its society, and care for older family members has been primarily within the home. We consider it to be very important that whenever possible the ageing should be cared for not in an unfamiliar and institutional setting but within the community, and within the family whenever possible. However, we also realize that as more family members begin to enter the work force the role of care-giver, usually filled by the women of the household, will become more difficult. It is at this time that the local community needs to step in to support the family and to supplement the family's ability to continue care-giving in the traditional and more comforting fashion. And it is essential that we do not approach questions of ageing solely on the basis of what care and support need to be given but, rather, as a source of knowledge, wisdom and experience from which we can greatly benefit and by which we can be guided. My delegation anticipates the opportunity to discuss this issue again in greater detail at the World Summit for Social Development and at the International Conference on Population and Development, which will be convened in Cairo in 1994.

Ms. FRECHETTE (Canada) (interpretation from French): It is a great privilege for me to be part of this plenary meeting marking the tenth anniversary of the International Plan of Action on Ageing. Every society and every individual is confronted with the realities of an ageing population. The average life expectancy worldwide has increased considerably in the last forty years, with the result that Governments and individuals are now being called upon to address new situations and needs.

We have read with interest the Secretary General's report on "Implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing". The treatment of the question of ageing has now obviously evolved to a certain maturity. We welcome the strategy that anticipates the coming decade and the clarity and practicality with which the guide was prepared.

In the area of seniors' issues, the Canadian experience is built on active partnership and social responsibility. Canada has since 1982 continued to endorse fully the principles of the United Nations International Plan of Action on Ageing and to work towards its practical application in the country. As a society, we accord high priority to meeting the entire spectrum of seniors' needs, especially in the area of health and social services.

In the past several years, seniors and other interested individuals across Canada have formed groups and organizations concerned with ageing-related issues. The Government of Canada, like all Canadians, realizes the importance this dynamic sector of the population has for the future of our society. This is why 20 years ago the Canadian Government created New Horizons, a programme devoted to offering financial assistance to groups of older Canadians who plan and manage their own projects.

(Ms. Fréchette, Canada)

The appointment of the first Minister of State for Seniors in 1987 gave further recognition to the status of seniors in Canada. The Minister of State's mandate was to give voice, in Parliament, to the interests and concerns of seniors. In the years following that appointment, productive consultations with seniors and the representatives of their organizations, self-help groups and individuals who work with older Canadians have been stepped up.

(spoke in English)

Faced with the important changes in the basic needs of our population, we have set out to design programmes, modify laws and debunk some of the myths that lead to prejudice and misunderstanding. As is suggested in the International Plan of Action, these programmes can have a dual purpose. On the one hand, they can encourage research into how seniors live their lives; and, on the other, they can help set standards that promote an enhanced quality of life and greater autonomy for seniors.

In the fall of 1991, we conducted the first National Survey on Ageing and Independence, involving 20,000 individuals representing both tomorrow's seniors - people between the ages of 45 and 64 - and today's seniors - aged 65 and older. The survey examined a wide range of issues relating to the quality of life and independence of seniors. The results will assist Governments, national and local organizations and individuals in developing innovative programmes and services.

Canadians are sensitive to the needs and concerns of seniors. We are proud of our social security system, which is our largest programme-expenditure area.

(Ms. Fréchette, Canada)

Furthermore, since housing is another concern for older Canadians, we implemented the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program to ensure that health and safety standards are met and homes made more accessible. This programme, among other things, helps seniors to stay in their homes as long as possible and responds to their need for independence by allowing them to remain in their communities.

One cannot ignore the problems faced by older women in our society. In 1988, the Minister of State for Seniors and her colleague, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, hosted a workshop on health and social-security needs for senior women and supported a series of follow-up workshops and research projects addressing this important issue.

The ageing of the population, along with the policy issues it entails, continues to pose important challenges for Canada. Canadians are deeply committed to creating a society in which seniors can realize their potential to the fullest and lead productive and independent lives.

Mr. KUKAN (Czechoslovakia): We constantly hear that youth is obliged to show consideration and respect for the elderly and to ensure that they enjoy a dignified retirement. Though this is true, it is not the sole reason for the interest of those who are still active in those who are retired.

Some people say that the elderly are in fact persons with disabilities caused by their age. That is not the case, since on the one hand, handicap does not necessarily mean disability - quite the contrary - and on the other, the very age of the elderly, achieved over a lifetime of work and experience, is an advantage when they are compared with the young. Therefore, the young must take an interest in the world of the elderly not only out of respect for

(Mr Kukan, Czechoslovakia)

their grey heads but also out of respect for them as the source of knowledge and experience acquired at a very high price. Let us speak, as we have done with regard to disabled persons, about the necessity of creating equal opportunities aimed at harnessing and utilizing their potential for all of us and for the future. Let us not retire the most precious values: knowledge, wisdom and experience.

The United Nations deserves our appreciation for its efforts in this field. The world's more intensive endeavours during the decade that has passed since the 1982 World Assembly on Ageing are also deserving of appreciation. This decade has certainly brought much progress in the area of care for the elderly, even though that progress might have been and in the future should be greater because, among other considerations, the world's population is getting older.

During the 10-year period from 1983 to 1992, when the International Plan of Action on Ageing was implemented, it was in Europe that the elderly were one of the fastest-growing social groups. A relative and an absolute increase in the numbers of old people and the ageing of the elderly population have been observed. For those in Northern and Western Europe, the demographic pressures are already being felt, whereas in Southern and Eastern Europe they are only beginning to have a significant impact. We are dealing with increasing proportions of elderly people and decreasing proportions of young people, with generational change; and we must deal with these matters in order to forestall the serious problems that will arise in the future if we are not able to alter our youth-oriented culture and way of thinking and if we continue to push the elderly into retirement and dependence.

(Mr Kukan, Czechoslovakia)

The Czech and Slovak Federal Republic welcomes the eight global targets on ageing for the year 2001 as proposed in the United Nations Secretary-General's report A/47/339 and considers them a solid basis for setting up the overall strategy of the United Nations in its approach to the elderly.

During the decade of the International Plan of Action on Ageing a number of formal measures were adopted that presented Czechoslovakia as a country that cared about the position of the elderly in society. In many respects it lived up to that image; for example, in the number of nursing homes for pensioners, the then-socialist Czechoslovakia had one of the best records in the world. The reality, however, was more complex than the image being created for the outside world.

(Mr. Kukan, Czechoslovakia)

An essential part of the social policy of present-day Czechoslovakia is its concern with ensuring the dignity of life so well deserved by the older generations, bearing in mind that the elderly of today have lived most of their lives without any chance to build the financial security that would prevent their being displaced to the periphery of society, and would instead afford them a full life after retirement.

Immediately after the major changes in Czechoslovakia's orientation, it became apparent that the accomodation of the economy to market conditions would be demanding and would bring about a number of social problems that the old social system was not capable of solving. Therefore, alongside the economic reform scenario, a social reform programme has been developed to clarify policy in this field, distinguishing it from State paternalism by restoring citizens' responsibility for their own fate and that of their families, implementing equal conditions for all and eliminating unnecessary preferences in the social care system. Our intention is to create a universal and unified system that, under the conditions of the labour market, will provide citizens unable to take care of themselves with a distinct level of social care. Instead of general protection, there will be a transformation to differentiated, individualized assistance, provided to those who really need it.

To attain these goals, both the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic have adopted a set of measures providing for increases and regular adjustments in the income of pensioners, so that their pensions will not fall behind the income of the economically active part of the population and will reasonably follow increases in the cost of living. To ensure care for older people, the Czech Government has adopted a law providing allowances for persons taking care of someone who is over 80 years old or who is disabled.

(Mr. Kukan, Czechoslovakia)

As far as the employment of the elderly is concerned, there is relatively high economic activity in the population over retirement age, representing approximately 10 per cent of the total working population. For those who lose their jobs, the 1991 employment law considers citizens over 50 years old as a special category when it comes to finding a new position; exceptionally, a pension may be awarded in the event of failure to find new employment.

The changed political atmosphere of Europe at the beginning of the 1990s, with hopes for a more integrated continent of nations sharing experiences and common ideals yet all dedicated to retaining their individual cultural inheritance, provides both a challenge and an opportunity for developing innovative systems of health and social care, closer collaboration between professionals from many varied backgrounds and objective cross-national research in areas previously considered too politically sensitive.

Attitudes towards caring for the old have long been determined by the health of the economy, the general standard of living and the overall state of morale within society. Neglect and maltreatment in previous years may be more easily understood within the context of past history. In the future there can be less justification for ignoring the special needs of older people or following a policy of banishing them to institutions when demands come to be seen as excessive. The growing affluence of many European countries, with greater understanding of, and a more positive approach to, those members of society least able to help themselves, should encourage the development of readily accessible and integrated systems of care and concern.

The elderly in particular have formed the segment of population with the least ability to defend themselves. With thousands of refugees on the move in Europe, those with disabilities have been left with little or no help at all. Further catastrophes, such as natural disasters and famine, could cause

(Mr. Kukan, Czechoslovakia)

devastation to living conditions and interpersonal ties. Again, those most affected will be the elderly.

Under these circumstances, special measures are needed to ensure that adequate help is provided to those most affected. As the elderly have specific needs, specific approaches must be implemented.

In conformity with its humanitarian traditions, and with the International Plan of Action on Ageing in mind, the Czechoslovak delegation is of the opinion that the time has come for the international community to start thinking about the elaboration of some kind of international emergency network for the elderly. The purpose of such a network would be to assist those populations where the elderly are affected by an unexpected and acute change of their situation and where existing political and economic systems are failing.

The participants in this network could be those Member States of the United Nations that are affected as well as other Member States, along with diverse local, national, regional and other international governmental and non-governmental organizations, individuals or informal groups. An international emergency fund for the elderly could work within the network to help cover the expenses of such aid.

The international community is obliged to protect the lives of vulnerable groups in society under specific conditions and to develop an effective instrument for international cooperation in this field. The more vulnerable the group, the higher should be the priority.

Mrs. GILES (Australia): It gives me great pleasure to represent Australia at these United Nations General Assembly special meetings on ageing.

In the decade since the Organization's International Plan of Action on Ageing was adopted, there have been major developments in many aspects of

(Mrs. Giles, Australia)

social policy concerned with older people in Australia. All these initiatives have been within the framework of the Federal Government's social justice strategy, which is based on four broad sets of principles: the equitable distribution of economic resources; equality of civic, legal and industrial rights; fair and equal access to essential services such as housing, health and education; and opportunity for personal development and participation in community life and decision-making.

The social justice strategy has special relevance to older people. Individually and as a group, older Australians are more likely to be vulnerable to threats to their independence and rights than are many other members of society. It is this vulnerability and the consequent needs of older people, not their age alone, that is the basis of policy development in Australia.

The social justice strategy is in close accord with the principles of the International Plan of Action on Ageing: independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity. These provide a framework for reviewing the policies and programmes developed for older people in Australia over the last 10 years. They also provide a foundation for looking to the future.

As Australia is often seen as a young country, this world Assembly serves an especially useful function in directing attention to older Australians. Older Australians are the fastest growing sector of the Australian population. Since the 1981 World Assembly on Ageing, the number of Australians aged 65 years and over has increased by more than half a million, an increase of 35 per cent.

(Mrs. Giles, Australia)

Looking ahead for the next decade, it is projected that the population aged 65 and over will grow by 22 per cent, to reach 2.4 million by the year 2001. The aged will then account for 12 per cent of the total population of Australia. In demographic terms, Australia thus ranks in the middle range of ageing nations.

Two features of Australia's aged population warrant particular note. First, large numbers of those who were born oversees in non-English-speaking countries and who migrated to Australia in the post-war years are now reaching old age. They are adding very substantially to the cultural and social diversity of ageing in Australia. Secondly, aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people are another distinct component of the aged population, whose societies have traditionally given high esteeem to the role of elders and are now experiencing many pressures in a changing world.

The last 10 years in Australia have indeed been a decade of action. The report attached to this statement gives a detailed account of many initiatives taken by the Federal Government, by State and Territory Governments, by voluntary organizations and by older people themselves.

I am only able to select some of these many achievements that show how the principles of the International Plan of Action are being applied and developed in Australia.

Independence, the subject of the first set of principles for older people, rests on three main conditions: having adequate incomes, housing that provides not only shelter but a secure and supportive environment for daily living and access to the same range of activities as others in the community.

The age pension is the cornerstone of economic independence for older Australians. The provision of adequate retirement income is a central

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objective of Australia's social security policy and there is a general expectation in the community that the age pension is an entitlement that gives recognition to the years that people have contributed to the development of the nation and will continue to do so.

To ensure the future viability of retirement income arrangements and provide for greater choices for older Australians, significant reforms have been made to several areas of social security provisions. In order to extend occupational pensions, the superannuation guarantee charge was introduced in 1989 in conjunction with the wages accord and industrial relations agreements with employers and unions.

Together, these measures will provide more adequate income replacement in retirement and enable greater choice in planning for retirement life-styles. In particular, there have been significant increases in superannuation coverage for women in recent years.

The second set of principles of the International Plan of Action focuses on participation through involvement of older people in Government policy making and support for community organizations. The Commonwealth Office for the Aged, located within the Commonwealth Department of Health, Housing and Community Services, was established in 1986 to coordinate consultations with key consumer organizations. The principal bodies for consultation are now the consumer forums for the aged in each State and Territory. These consist of individuals drawn from a wide range of older people's groups, including pensioner and superannuation federations, councils on the ageing, ethnic organizations, returned services leagues, aboriginal and Torres Strait islander communities, carers' associations, the Alzheimer's Association, and the Country Women's Association.

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Over the last decade, several State governments have established special units on ageing supported by a variety of consultative committees on which older people are represented.*

Older people participate widely in voluntary organizations. The role of voluntary organizations was recognized in the Australian delegation to the 1981 World Assembly, which included representatives of the Australian Council on the Ageing and the voluntary Association of Gerontology. The participation of voluntary organizations has made a significant contribution to achieving the goals of the International Plan of Action on Ageing.

Many of these organizations provide opportunities for service to the community as volunteers, and both Federal and State governments fund eligible community organizations to support their volunteer activities. Among the groups that receive support under the Federal Government's community organizations support programme are the Australian Council on the Ageing, the Australian Pensioners' and Superannuants' Federation, the Alzheimer's Association, and the recently formed National Carers' Association. Governments have been able to draw upon a vigorous and effective older women's network and the older persons' action centre in community activities such as the proper use of medication by older people.

The value of participation in organizations extending beyond Australia is recognized, and several channels have developed for international exchanges with, for example, the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development

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* Mr. Mongbe (Benin), Vice President, took the Chair.

(Mrs. Giles, Australia)

(OECD) and the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (CSDHA). Older Australians have also represented their organizations at numerous overseas meetings. In 1992 these included the International Federation on Ageing Congress in India and the International Federation of Associations of Older People, in Spain.

The principles of the International Plan of Action concerned with care of older people are strongly oriented to the development of community care, an orientation shared by Australian policy in this area.

The Federal Government initiated a 10-year care reform strategy in 1984-1985. The reform strategy is focused on provision of services within the home so that older people may remain as independent for as long as possible. This approach is consistent with the expressed needs and desires of older people themselves and those who care for them.

The goals of the reform strategy are concerned with providing equitable access to the most appropriate care to accord with individual assessed needs and the effective utilization of available resources. To achieve these goals, policy objectives have been set to bring about changes in the balance of care between residential and community care and, within residential care, between nursing homes and hostels.

A mid-term review of the reform strategy was undertaken in 1990-1991. The review reported that significant progress had been made in transforming Australia's aged-care system from one that was inequitable, inefficient and imbalanced to one that is more equitable and efficient and provides a more appropriate balance of care.

One of the key programme initiatives that have reshaped Australia's aged care programmes is the establishment of multi-disciplinary aged care

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assessment teams. In the first five years of the reform strategy, funding of home and community care services doubled in real terms.

All aged care programmes recognize the special needs of different groups in the aged population. These groups include older people from non-English-speaking backgrounds, aboriginal and Torres Strait islanders, older people in rural and remote areas and people with dementia. Strategies to promote access to mainstream services include provision of information in community languages and training of staff to develop awareness of different cultural practices and values.

The Federal Government has initiated a five-year national action plan for dementia care to give special assistance to people with dementia and their carers. The aim of the action plan is to enhance the capacity of all aged care programmes to meet the needs of this client group. Additional developments will be supported in assessment, service delivery, community education, measures to ensure quality of care, research and evaluation and policy and planning. Copies of this plan have been distributed to the Assembly.

My focus now shifts from the frail aged to the wider population of active older people - and this, at age 70, is the vast majority of Australians - to considering the fourth set of principles of the International Plan of Action. Self-fulfilment for older people comes from much the same range of interests and activities as for the community as a whole - from educational, cultural, spiritual and recreational opportunities.

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The level of concern about these opportunities in Australia is reflected by two recent parliamentary inquiries. The report of the first inquiry, entitled "Is Retirement Working?", focused on measures that assisted older people to maintain an active role in community affairs, and it gave access to advice and options that promoted an active and positive use of leisure time. Opportunities that provide for maximum participation in continuing voluntary and/or paid work were also canvassed.

The second report, entitled "Expectations of Life: Increasing the Options for the 21st Century", affirmed that much has been achieved in fostering the independence and well-being of older Australians. It addressed many of the contemporary structural and philosophical changes in life-style and patterns of time use that are confronting Australian society and are contributing to the debate about the meaning of successful ageing in Australia.

One specific example of the ways in which older people are taking the initiative themselves is the growth of the University for the Third Age - U3A - in Australia. Established in 1984 in Australia, U3A is entirely a self-help initiative. By mid-1992, U3A was operating through almost 100 independent campuses, with some 16,000 members.

Another example that I am very pleased to give at this world assembly is the successful celebration throughout Australia in 1991 and in 1992 of the United Nations International Day for the Elderly. This has provided a very special opportunity to demonstrate the contribution of older people to the community. An International Day for the Elderly calendar has been issued; it gives details of activities of interest to older people throughout the coming year and identifies opportunities for participation in a wide range of activities, many of them with an intergenerational focus.

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The fifth and final set of principles of the International Plan of Action are perhaps the most fundamental and underpin all the actions that I have mentioned so far. These principles are concerned with the dignity of all older persons, the protection of their rights and their entitlement to equal opportunities without discrimination on the grounds of age.

The Australian Government has taken a number of steps to uphold the dignity of older individuals. User-rights initiatives have ensured that older people in residential care facilities and those receiving community services enjoy the same fundamental freedoms as others in the community, including full respect for their dignity, beliefs, needs and privacy, and the right to make decisions about their care and the quality of their lives. The user-rights strategy in residential care has five components: a charter, an agreement between the operator and resident, complaints units, community visitor schemes and advocacy services.

I especially want to highlight the community visitors schemes. These have been implemented to improve the quality of life for residents of nursing homes and hostels who do not have regular contact with the community. The majority of community visitors are older people, but a wide range of age groups are involved. Community visitors act as volunteers and receive payment to cover their expenses. This scheme has won acclaim from residents, visitors and nursing home staff alike.

For older people living in the community, the main area in which they seek to address perceived infringements of their dignity is through combating discrimination on the basis of age. Age-discrimination legislation is proceeding at both State and Federal levels. An age-discrimination task force has been established by the federal Attorney General with a view to developing

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anti-discrimination legislation in the areas of commonwealth responsibility. An Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission is also taking an active part in promoting change in these areas, and to give expression to Australia's commitments under International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions and recommendations. Legislative change in this area will give formal recognition to changes in community attitudes towards retirement and other age-based social conventions, and open the way for further changes in attitudes and practices.

The International Plan of Action on Ageing calls upon the international community to enhance the lives of older people so that they can enjoy their advancing years in peace, health and security. The achievements in realizing the goals of the Plan of Action in Australia over the past decade are a matter of some pride to me personally and to the Australian Government and all Australians who have contributed to the outcome. The efforts of older people individually and through their many and varied organizations are particularly recognized.

The achievements of recent years give hope for further progress in the future. I am confident that reaffirming Australia's commitment to the principles of the International Plan of Action on Ageing will bring renewed interest and energy to our thinking and activity and will achieve continuing improvements in the well-being of older people.

As I declare here in New York Australia's commitment to the principles of the Plan of Action, the same commitment is being made by the Minister for Aged, Family and Health Services, Mr. Peter Staples, in Parliament House in Canberra, Australia's capital. Mr. Staples is today meeting with the national

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consumer forums for the aged and he will be asking them to undertake the task of developing new targets for the year 2001 in accord with the International Plan of Action on Ageing. No group could be better equipped to undertake this task. The outcome of their deliberations will most certainly ensure the continuing realization of the principles of the International Plan of Action on Ageing for the benefit of all.

Ms. BERRY (United States of America): I have the honour of speaking at this special series of meetings of the General Assembly on ageing, marking the tenth anniversary celebration of the World Assembly on Ageing.

As the United States Commissioner on Ageing, I am responsible for promoting the independence and dignity of all older persons in our country. It is the obligation of our Government to assure the positive impact of our programmes on the lives of older persons, their families and neighbours, with the intent of keeping older persons in their own homes and in the community for as long as possible. It is my belief that Government and voluntary as well as private sector organizations and individuals all have a responsibility and a role to play in ensuring that those older persons who need assistance receive it.

I want to talk very briefly about the National Eldercare Campaign, the major ageing initiative that our Government began last year and about which Secretary Sullivan spoke earlier. The principles upon which the National Eldercare Campaign have been built are relevant to all of us who are confronting the impact of global ageing. The Campaign is a call to action to broaden the base of societal involvement and commitment to assist today's vulnerable elderly.

(Ms. Berry, United States)

Our particular focus is on the physically and mentally impaired, socially isolated, those living alone, the rural, and those of low-income and minority status. We are encouraging all organizations and individuals, including those not traditionally associated with ageing, to participate actively in developing solutions to the pressing needs of today's vulnerable elderly and to help prepare for the growing number of at-risk older persons in the years to come.

We have found that in many cases there are untapped resources within communities. From collective action, advocacy and coalition building, greater participation and support from the community at large will result.

(Ms. Berry, United States)

We acknowledge that government, at all levels, cannot do it alone. The need is too great, and our public resources are finite and strained. As the frail elderly population increases, public resources will be insufficient to keep pace with the demand. That is why we have to attach priority to broadening the base of support for and commitment to the vulnerable elderly and why we are encouraging collective societal action and advocacy on their behalf.

The social movement to promote elder care builds upon our nation's heritage of care-giving, which is so characteristic of our American families, and offers hope to the millions of Americans who live alone and are without spouses or relatives. Community coalitions made up of private-sector and voluntary organizations, volunteers, religious leaders, older persons themselves and others are reaching out to assist seniors at risk throughout the nation under the National Eldercare Campaign.

The provision of home- and community-based services will continue to challenge our nation as our older population grows. We believe that the social movement of elder care strengthens and supports our family care-givers and serves as a nucleus for the development of public and social policy to ensure human dignity for all Americans as we age. Through the campaign, we are beginning a national social movement to build commitment to and support for the nation's vulnerable elderly.

The National Eldercare Campaign has touched a responsive chord across our nation as more people become aware of the needs of today's vulnerable seniors, as well as the challenge that confronts us in the future. More people are joining the Campaign every day, and there is energy and enthusiasm reflecting new commitment to and support for our vulnerable older persons.

(Ms. Berry, United States)

As we know, all older persons want to feel wanted, secure, loved and needed. All older persons want to live with dignity. This is what the National Eldercare Campaign is all about - to create the environment in which older persons can receive the support they need to help them to maintain their independence and dignity in old age.

I sincerely appreciate this opportunity to share these thoughts. It has been a great honour to address the General Assembly today.

Mr. MIFSUD-BONNICI (Malta): All of us are aware that one of the most significant phenomena of the twentieth century has been the dramatic increase in the number and proportion of elderly persons. Population aging poses unique challenges to every society, as, unlike other population-growth variables, it is neither amenable to change nor easily modified. Consequently the attention of every Government should focus not on whether it can change the basic process of population aging but, rather, on the very issues that arise from this process.

The process of demographic and social change in Malta has, over time, manifested itself in an overall change in attitudes, not only of the individual but also of society at large. The elderly population as an ever-increasing component of society has already been substantially affected by repercussions of its own success. As a result of the declining birth rate, coupled with an increase in life expectancy, the registered proportion of the elderly in Malta - currently 14 per cent - is expected to continue to rise steadily, so that by the first quarter of the next century one person in four will be over the age of 60.

This projected rise in the absolute numbers and proportion of the old and very old in the population will determine the demand on provisions designed to meet the diverse needs and stages of needs of the elderly individual.

(Mr. Mifsud-Bonnici, Malta)

The issue becomes more complex when one takes into consideration the fact that the traditional role of the family in the daily care of and support for its elderly members is seriously threatened as this basic social unit is subjected to various economic, social and psychological strains.

Moreover, given the concurrent phenomena of industrialization, urbanization and modernization, as well as other demographic and socio-economic factors that have a direct bearing on the family structure and its function, it becomes evident that the needs of the frail elderly can no longer be effectively met by the family alone without the support of specialized programmes and services of the public sector. It is important to note that such services should complement, rather than substitute for or replace, family care. Governments, while trying to support and strengthen the family's traditional role of provider of care for the elderly, must at the same time provide public delivery systems for those elderly who cannot rely on themselves or on their families.

If Governments were to look at the growing proportions of the elderly within their populations from the point of view of welfare-state ideology the situation would become more complex for the State and unbearable for the elderly, who, in turn, would be looked upon only as a tolerated burden on society.

Aware, on one hand, of the structural and functional changes in the family and, on the other hand, of the challenges and issues generated by a rapidly growing elderly population, my Government strongly believes that a solution can be found only if there is a radical transformation from the welfare-state model of social policy to the welfare-society model or, rather, the caring-society model, in which every social institution - be it the State,

(Mr. Mifsud-Bonnici, Malta)

the Church, the voluntary organisations, the community, family members or, last but not least, the elderly themselves - has an important role to play by showing that it actually altruistically cares.

The welfare of our elderly depends heavily on the policy-makers' potential to conceive effective strategies that may at times vary extensively from traditional policies, which are basically of a financial or institutional nature.

The issues related to ageing are multidisciplinary in nature - covering such sectors as income security, health care, housing and environment, social assistance and family protection, educational and cultural activities, recreation and rehabilitation. Care of the elderly is a complex matter, and the elements of care are highly interdependent. The health and happiness of the elderly is dependent upon social, emotional and psychological factors.

Social policy in Malta has dramatically developed from the traditionally problem-oriented, depersonalized approach to the present-day community-oriented, personalized approach covering the totality of the individual's well-being while reflecting the centrality of the human being and the human family.

Current strategies provide various schemes from which the elderly benefit either in cash or in services. Pension schemes, free medical care, community programmes, home-help services and residential care constitute the core of the strategy that safeguards the general well-being of our elderly.

The concept of welfare and security is of a multidimensional nature. Longevity has to be complemented by quality of life. Universal pension entitlement does not in itself ensure that the elderly remain active or that they preserve their relationships with family, friends and familiar

(Mr. Mifsud-Bonnici, Malta)

surroundings. In this context, and in the light of the fact that the elderly are not a homogeneous group, there has been a total shift in the nature of service provision in Malta in the past four years. Particular focus is now being given to community-based care strategies that cater for the individual, thus providing for personal needs, as distinct from former policies that maintained age as their criterion for entitlement even though age alone is not a reliable indicator of needs.

Such services as the Home Care/Help Scheme, Telecare and Meals on Wheels are all strategies that were conceived and implemented with the primary aim of providing the necessary personal care and support to enable an elderly person to continue living a dignified life in the familiar surroundings and privacy of his or her own home.

(Mr. Mifsud-Bonnici, Malta)

As a complementary endeavour to prevent relocation trauma, the Government embarked on the costly projects of building community homes within different localities so as to satisfy the needs and demands for residential care that are presented by applicants living in that region. Such a policy is being adhered to in the belief that by remaining in one's own social surroundings adjustment should be less disturbing.

An increase in the number of elderly is bound to reflect itself in an increase in the demand for services. Equally true is the fact that specialized services ask for personnel with correspondingly specialized training, who should therefore be better able to identify, assess and provide for the needs of the elderly. The Government, in collaboration with the Institute of Gerontology at the University of Malta, is implementing training courses in gerontology and geriatrics that are designed to give a deeper understanding of the complexities of old age. Such education programmes are not only an invaluable investment but an essential asset for the future development of the existing network of services.

The formulation and implementation of policies should not be an end in itself. These have to be reviewed so as to ensure that they are meeting the widest possible range of needs. Where and when necessary, such strategies need to be supplemented or complemented by other services. The newly set up National Council for the Elderly should prove to be an important organ when it comes to the identification of needs and specification of wants.

With the aim of further expanding community-based care services, serious consideration is being given to the eventual introduction of a handyman service to carry out minor repair works in the elderly person's own home.

(Mr. Mifsud-Bonnici, Malta)

This should fill yet another gap in a compendium of services designed to enhance the quality of life of the individual by attending to his specific needs in his own home.

It is felt that Malta's achievements in the field of ageing can be argued to be outstanding, from both a national and international perspective. The service package offered to elderly citizens renders Malta unique among developing and developed countries, in that it nationally provides for: 100 per cent age-pension entitlements; payment of allowances for rents; rebate on water and electricity meter rent charges; a 100 per cent entitlement to bonus; totally free hospitalization; complete access to public-funded health centres; free prescription of drugs; non-contributory financial benefits in the case of chronically ill persons; non-contributory carers' pensions for those looking after elderly relatives; heavily subsidized community-based services such as the Home Help Scheme and the delivery of meals; the extensive allocation of technologically advanced apparatus such as the special telephone service provided under the Telecare Scheme; free access to the specialized geriatric and rehabilitative hospital; heavily subsidized residence in community homes that have been recently built to modern standards; extensive refurbishment of long-standing residential institutions; upgrading of service through retraining of staff, procurement of modern physical aids and medical equipment; completely free-of-charge supply of incontinence pads on the basis of need; and financial assistance to carry out adaptations in the home so as to enable a person to cope in spite of his physical disabilities.

(Mr. Mifsud-Bonnici, Malta)

Above all, it is noteworthy that such entitlements are universal, irrespective of sex, so that Maltese women have a direct access to services in their own right.

The Government of Malta's constant efforts to improve where and when possible the care services that are designed to meet the needs of an ever-growing number of elderly persons within the community are being significantly complemented by the sterling services provided by a number of voluntary organizations, notably the Roman Catholic Church. Religion is a major factor in the lives of the Maltese. The elderly in particular regard the Catholic Church as a very important part of their lives and derive great comfort from its spiritual and material support.

Malta's commitment to issues relating to ageing is not merely a secular exercise restricted to our national conditions and requirements. Malta has also extended its international concern for the consequences of the ageing of populations, especially in developing countries, where over three quarters of the world's elderly will reside in the next 35 years. Lack of planning and awareness within this heterogeneous region will ensure that the majority of the world's elderly will become marginalized. Through the foresight of Malta's intervention, and with the backing and support of the United Nations, the International Institute on Ageing (INIA), was established to provide training to key personnel within developing countries.

But the needs in developing countries were found to be much more diverse. INIA, as it is more popularly known, therefore rose to the challenge by extending its activities to include the establishment of a collaborating network among specialized agencies in both developed and developing countries, the effective and practical exchange of information through its now

(Mr. Mifsud-Bonnici, Malta)

well-established quarterly bulletin, BOLD, and through its publication and free distribution of international monographs on ageing. So far the Institute has published monographs for Australia, Canada, China, Finland, Guatemala, Hungary, and Israel. Preparations are also in hand to publish monographs for other countries including, Belgium, Cuba, France, Italy, Mexico, Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States.

All of these activities are the concrete and practical results of the Vienna Plan of Action, representing the major expression of the United Nations resolution to face the challenge of the ageing of populations through appropriate planning.

The increasing central role that INIA is taking within the international debate, and the burgeoning of collaborative projects with national governments, has firmly established the need and utility of this centre of excellence. The Maltese Government, in cooperation with the United Nations, has laid the base for the benefit of future generations.

An increase in the proportion of the elderly within society constitutes a heavier financial burden on a correspondingly decreasing economically productive sector. Such a challenge is not easy to overcome as it is arguable that economic growth will prosper at the same rate as the increase in demand that is anticipated for the ageing of the population. This is the reality that should monitor future developments in the years to come. However, with the right tuning, the expansion and effectiveness of services can be maintained, developed and enriched.

(Mr. Mifsud-Bonnici, Malta)

The Government of Malta had the foresight to realize the emergence of such issues more than 20 years ago and it is now approaching the same eventuality of change with planning, discussion and openness. May our determination and genuine commitment see us through the challenge that we shall have to face at the turn of the century, in the best interests of the elderly.

Mrs. GONDWE (Malawi): On behalf of my delegation may I say that it is an honour and privilege to address this Assembly once more on an issue which is so dear to many of us. The Government of Malawi views this occasion as very special and is therefore lending its support to efforts at the international level to understand and deal with the issues of population ageing.

Malawi values ageing mainly because of its positive aspects. In this respect the elderly are revered and respected as symbols of our nation's past and its link with the present and the future. My Life President, His Excellency Ngwazi Dr. H. Kamuzu Banda, has led the way on this front in Malawi through his speeches and by designating Youth Week, a week in which youth and adults work together on community projects; and also Mothers' Day, a day set aside to honour and respect not only mothers but older people. In his speeches my Life President has emphasized that youth must respect their elders.

(Mrs. Gondwe, Malawi)

This means that younger people should look after older relatives and consult them for advice and wise counsel. This is the policy that has been guiding the Government in dealing with the issue of ageing.

The Government of Malawi has therefore participated in many meetings on ageing and contributed to the ideas on how to handle the problem of ageing populations. It is with satisfaction and pride that we look back to 1982, when Malawi was part of the process that gave rise to the International Plan of Action on Ageing. Indeed, it is in the same spirit that we have seen it fit for the Government of Malawi to participate in this meeting on the tenth anniversary of the Plan of Action. We view the inclusion of the item on the agenda of the Assembly as an indication that the problem is taken seriously and therefore needs our support.

We must look back to the last 10 years and assess the impact of the Plan of Action. To us in Malawi, the Plan has created an additional level of awareness of the impact of ageing and of the needs of the elderly in our societies that was not there before. This is the beginning of progress towards finding solutions to the problems of ageing, and we feel that we should not be discouraged because we have been unable to achieve all that we set ourselves to do. Rather, we should renew our resolve to deal adequately with the issues involved in ageing and its effects on various aspects of the human experience. We therefore urge the United Nations and all its Members to strengthen the existing programme on ageing, because some of us have not fully benefitted from it.

Time is not on our side. Faced with many other problems, we may be tempted to relegate the question of ageing. But, as everyone knows, postponement of a problem is not a solution; it will only come back bigger and in a worse form. Therefore, we need to act while there is time.

(Mrs. Gondwe, Malawi)

It is said by the experts that Africa will experience the impact of ageing in significant proportions after the year 2025. This may give the false impression that we have time. We do not. Because of problems such as AIDS, demographic ageing may be realized sooner than later in our societies. At the rate AIDS is killing the younger and more economically active persons in our societies, the pace of ageing of the population has accelerated, implying that this too is a priority problem. Rural to urban migration by young people, leading to the neglect of the elderly, is also an emerging problem. In general, improvements in health and nutrition will lead to increased life expectancy and contribute to the ageing phenomenon.

This therefore calls for efforts on our part to prepare ourselves. In this respect, the Malawi Government would like to reiterate its support for all efforts made by the United Nations, Governments and institutions designed to tackle the ageing issue and at the same time to request their assistance in helping us to plan and develop strategies for dealing with it. Our achievements so far have been modest and have not really made the required impact, because we are constrained financially and technically. However, at the same time, our social and economic structures are changing rapidly, and their impact on vulnerable groups of society, such as the elderly, is generally negative.

The sheer size of the population of the aged in Malawi means that we cannot cope with the problem on our own. For example, in 1990 it was estimated that there were 341,409 people aged 60 years and over in Malawi out of a total population of 8,288,900. The aged represent 4.11 per cent of the total population. This varies from 1.7 per cent to 5.9 per cent in certain districts within the country. Our current dependency ratio is 1:01, because we have a generally young population. These people have special needs that

(Mrs. Gondwe, Malawi)

must be addressed. These figures will increase in the future, and the relative proportion of the elderly will be much higher, thus imposing an even bigger burden on an already constrained economy and society.

In this vein, we will be needing help in various ways, including technical assistance, finance and manpower development. My Government applauds the United Nations for taking the lead in this field, and would like to support the continuation of the programme on ageing and its strengthening and expansion, all the more so as the goals of the Plan of Action have not all been achieved. The existence of the ongoing programme is also one way to ensure that attention to the problem is not overtaken by other priority needs.

I would like to conclude by thanking you, Sir, for your attention and for giving priority to the problem of ageing. My Government wholly supports the United Nations efforts in uplifting the lives of the aged around the world.

AGENDA ITEM 8 (continued)

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK: THIRD REPORT OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE (A/47/250/Add.2)

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): I should like to draw the attention of representatives to the third report of the General Committee (A/47/250/Add.2), which concerns the request made by the Philippines for the inclusion in the agenda of the current session of an additional item, entitled "Emergency assistance to the Philippines".

The General Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that the item should be included in the agenda.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include in its agenda the additional item, entitled "Emergency assistance to the Philippines"?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): The General Committee also decided to recommend to the Assembly that this item should be considered directly in plenary meeting.

May I take it that the General Assembly adopts this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): May I also take it that the item should be considered with priority because of its urgent character?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from French): In this connection, I should like to inform representatives that this item will be considered next week at a date to be announced.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.